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ABSTRACT

A handbook on accreditation is presented by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. After providing an overview on accreditation, explanations are provided on General Institutional Requirements concerning the institutional program and college organization, operation, and public disclosure. The evaluative criteria that an institution must fulfill for accreditation and for candidacy are also covered, along with the evaluation process and evaluation cycle. The evaluation process includes: the self-study, choosing a visiting team, the self-study report and other documents, distribution of materials by the college and the Commission, the visiting team reports, institutional response, review processes, and the appeals process. A sample schedule of events for the accreditation process is included, along with a list of documents that should be sent to the Commission. Information is also included on the Statement of Affiliation Status, with examples of simple and complex cases, and the monitoring by the Status, with examples of simple and complex cases; and the monitoring by the Commission of changes/developments at the college. Appended materials include the Commission's Preliminary Information Form, a list of resource materials, and the Commission's Rules of Procedures. (SW)

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A HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION

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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1984-85

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North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
159 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601
1984

STAFF OF
THE COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
(312) 263-0456 (800) 621-7440

Thurston E. Manning	Director
Joseph J. Semrow	Associate Director
Patricia A. Thrash	Associate Director
Steven D. Crow	Assistant Director
Jean Mather	Assistant Director
Susan E. Van Kollenburg	Coordinator of Operations

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PREFACE

What does accreditation with the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools mean? How does accreditation differ from candidacy? Upon what criteria are decisions to grant candidacy and accreditation based? How does an institution apply for consideration by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education?

The staff of the Commission has prepared this 1984-85 edition of its *Handbook of Accreditation* to answer these and other commonly asked questions as clearly and concisely as we can. The reader will not find every detail of policy and procedure, every special case, fully treated here; instead, the *Handbook* is designed to provide an overview of the Commission's accreditation process and a brief history of how that process has evolved.

For some, this overview will be enough. But those who seek fuller information on the self-study and evaluation processes, and on the nature of on-site visits, will also want to read two other Commission documents: *A Guide for Self-Study and Evaluation* and *A Manual for the Evaluation Visit*. Together, these three documents are meant to provide their reader with a detailed description of the principles, policies and procedures which currently govern the Commission's work. The *Handbook* is the core of this set of documents, and each of the other publications assumes its reader's familiarity with the information contained here. All three documents are revised and republished annually.

The Introduction describes the meaning and purposes of accreditation and the evolution of the Commission's evaluative principles. Chapter II explains the General Institutional Requirements which every institution affiliated with the Commission must meet. Chapters III and IV detail the Criteria for Accreditation and the Criteria for Candidacy. (These chapters have been allowed to contain some repetition so that they can be read independently.) Chapter V describes, step-by-step, the procedures by which the Commission conducts its evaluations to determine whether an institution meets the criteria. Chapters VI and VII detail the Statement of Affiliation Status and a related "Policy on Changes Affecting the Affiliation Status of an Institution."

The staff of the Commission hopes that this *Handbook*, together with the *Guide* and the *Manual*, will answer most of the questions the reader will have about the accreditation process. Please contact us if they do not.

I. Introduction

The Meaning of Institutional Accreditation

There are two types of educational accreditation: **institutional** and **specialized** (sometimes called **program**). Institutional accreditation evaluates an entire institution and accredits it as a whole; specialized accreditation evaluates particular units, schools, or programs within an institution, such as nursing, teacher education, or chemistry. The former is conducted by six regional accrediting associations—the Middle States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Southern, and Western Associations of Colleges and Schools—and by several national agencies and associations; the latter, by about seventy specialized accrediting agencies such as the National League for Nursing, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the American Chemical Society. This *Handbook* treats postsecondary institutional accreditation as it is currently conducted by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

"In no country in the world," DeTocqueville wrote, "has the principle of association been more successfully used, or applied to a greater multitude of objects, than in America." And voluntary accreditation as it is conducted by the various accrediting associations is, indeed, a process unique to the United States.

It developed during the last century to meet the need for some agency to attest the quality of educational institutions. Its nongovernmental, voluntary, regional character has been shaped by the same American emphases on self-reliance and local control that DeTocqueville observed in the 183

Today, accreditation is both a process and a result. As a process, it is a form of peer review in which educational institutions establish a set of criteria and procedures by which they and their fellows are judged. As a result, it is a form of certification by which the quality of an educational institution, as defined by the accrediting body's criteria, is affirmed.

The Purposes of Accreditation

The accreditation of postsecondary institutions as it is conducted by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association has two principal purposes: to provide public certification that an institution is of acceptable quality, and to assist institutions in improving their educational programs and related activities. The Commission views each of these purposes as equally important, and its policies and procedures are designed to accomplish them both.

The Commission's accreditation process is meant to foster excellence in postsecondary education by developing criteria and guidelines for assessing educational effectiveness; to encourage institutional improvement by providing the opportunity for continuous self-study and evaluation; and to provide counsel and assistance to both developing and established institutions.

The North Central Association

On March 29 and 30, 1895, thirty-six school, college, and university administrators from seven midwestern states met at Northwestern University in response to an invitation signed by the presidents of the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, Northwestern University, and the University of Wisconsin, and by the principals of Grand Rapids High School, Michigan Military Academy, and the Michigan Normal School. They had been called to "organize, if deemed expedient, an association of colleges and secondary schools of the North-Central States." The constitution of the association these educators formed stated that the North Central Association's object would be "the establishment of close relations between the colleges and secondary schools" of the region.

Within a very short time, the desire to improve articulation between secondary schools and colleges led to extensive examination of the quality of education at both levels; and that led to the accreditation of secondary schools and, later, colleges and universities.

Two histories of the Association—Calvin O. Davis' *A History of the North Central Association* (1945) and Louis G. Geiger's *Voluntary Accreditation: A History of the North Central Association 1945-1970* (1970)—trace this evolution and chronicle the decisions and actions the Association has taken to provide educational leadership to the region and the country.

Today, the Association serves colleges and schools in nineteen states—Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming—and the American Dependents' Schools operated overseas for the children of American military and civilian personnel. Its day-to-day operations are conducted by its two Commissions: the Commission on Schools, located in Boulder, which accredits institutions below the postsecondary level; and the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, in Chicago, which accredits postsecondary institutions.

Forms of Affiliation

Postsecondary educational institutions may be affiliated with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, and through it with the Association, in either of two ways. One is **membership**, which is synonymous with accreditation; the other is **candidacy**, a preaccreditation status.

Both affiliations are voluntary, and are initiated by an institution's contacting the Director of the Commission. An institution becomes accredited, and thus a member, after the Commission has determined through the evaluation process outlined in Chapter V of this *Handbook* that it meets the General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation described in Chapters II and III. An institution achieves candidacy for accreditation status after the Commission has determined through the process outlined in Chapter V that it meets the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation described in Chapters II and IV. An institution continues its membership and accreditation as long as it continues to meet the Criteria for Accreditation and the other obligations of membership; an institution continues its candidacy for accreditation for a fixed period of time—usually no longer than six years—until it either fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation or has its affiliation with the Commission terminated.

Membership indicates both to other institutions and to the public that an accredited institution meets the Criteria for Accreditation of the Commission. It also indicates the institution's commitment to the purposes and goals of the Association. Candidacy indicates that an institution meets

the Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation and is progressing toward accreditation; it does not, however, automatically assure eventual accreditation. Candidacy provides an institution with the opportunity to establish a formal, publicly-recognized relationship with the Association, and is the recommended approach to seeking accreditation for most non-affiliated institutions.

Recognition by the Office of Education

To determine eligibility for United States government assistance under certain legislation, the Office of Education consults the lists of postsecondary institutions accredited or granted candidacy by nationally recognized accrediting agencies that the government views as reliable authorities on the quality of educational institutions and programs. Since the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, a member of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, is among these governmentally-recognized authorities, affiliation with the Commission helps an institution to become eligible for various federal funds.

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

In a letter to Samuel Kercheval, Thomas Jefferson observed that "laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed... institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times." This is, of course, easier said than done. But since it began the task of accrediting postsecondary educational institutions in 1913 what is now known as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association has tried to both reflect and encourage progress in higher education.

At first, postsecondary institutions were measured against a set of standards. Some were quite explicit ("the college, if a corporate institution, shall possess a productive endowment of not less than $200,000"; "the college should limit the number of students in a recitation or laboratory class to thirty"); others were broader ("the college should be provided with adequate books in the library and laboratory equipment to develop and fully illustrate each course taught"). During the first decades of the century, such quantitative and prescriptive standards helped to bring much-needed order to higher education.

But as early as 1921 President Judson of the University of Chicago warned against the danger of excessive rigidity

in the standards; and by the end of the twenties, critics charged that the standards had become roadblocks to legitimate experimentation and constructive change. The North Central Association's college commission responded to these concerns by undertaking an exhaustive study of the entire accreditation process. As it had earlier led the other regional associations in accrediting institutions of higher education, it now initiated a reconsideration of the "standards approach" it had devised.

This reconsideration ended in a fundamental shift in the emphasis of the accreditation process which led the Commission to the principles which still guide it today. John Stuart Mill once argued that "it is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth, within limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation." As a result of its study of accreditation, the Commission came to have much the same view concerning its institutions. For the study determined that many of the criticisms of the standards approach were valid, and that there was less correlation between imposition of the standards and assurance of educational quality than had been supposed.

The concept of standardization was abandoned (even the word "standards" was banished from North Central literature). Henceforth, the Association declared in 1934, an institution would be judged "on the basis of the total pattern it presents... It is accepted as a principle of procedure that superiority in some characteristic may be regarded as compensating, to some extent, for deficiencies in other respects... an institution will be judged in terms of the purposes it seeks to serve." Under the standards approach, failure to measure up to one or more of the standards meant denial of accreditation; now, strengths were to be weighed against weaknesses to evaluate the "total pattern" of the institution. Before, all institutions were expected to have the same fundamental purposes; now, an institution was to be judged in the light of its own, self-declared purposes—as long as these were appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution. "Standards" were replaced by "criteria"; "inspectors" became "examiners." And the basis for accreditation decisions became a comparison of data concerning an institution against a set of "norms" derived from data accumulated from many institutions. The "pattern" of

data from the institution being evaluated was compared to a "pattern map" based on these norms, and the institution was accredited if the two patterns seemed to match.

The pattern map technique was used until after World War II. It became apparent that the notion of standardization—the pressure to conform—was inherent in the very idea of norms. The idea of a norm assumes similarity; institutions cannot be measured against a norm unless they are basically alike. But the 1934 principle accepted the fact that they were *not* alike. Moreover, using normative data to make evaluation decisions also conflicted with the principle that an institution was to be judged in terms of its own purposes. Further, in 1957 the Commission began a program of periodically reaffirming the accreditation of member institutions. As a consequence, a new emphasis was placed on institutional renewal and development.

In response to these new conditions, the Commission developed its *Guide for the Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Education* (1958). The *Guide* moved beyond the ideas of norms and the pattern map to direct the attention of both institutions and Commission examiners to seven basic questions which were considered indicative of the areas that needed to be assessed in order to determine the quality of an educational institution (e.g., "What is the educational task of the institution?"; "Are the necessary resources available for carrying out the task . . .?"; "Is student life on campus relevant to the institution's task?"). The focus of evaluation became more qualitative, less quantitative, and, as a result, the professional judgment of the Commission's examiners became proportionately more important in the evaluation decision. In various editions, this *Guide* was in use until the early seventies, and the areas it addressed are still apparent in the Commission's current Evaluative Criteria.

In the sixties and seventies, the Commission's membership increased in both size and variety. Community colleges, vocational-technical institutes, and specialized institutions assumed an increasing importance in American higher education, and the configurations of resources and organization appropriate to them were not always comparable to those traditionally found in four-year colleges and universities. The Commission joined the other regional postsecondary accrediting commissions in

responding to these changes by adopting a set of "conditions for eligibility" in the early seventies; in effect, these conditions limited and described the kinds of postsecondary institutions the regional associations would accredit.

Since the mid-seventies, when its *Handbook on Accreditation* first appeared, the Commission has increasingly emphasized the self-study process as both a means to institutional improvement and renewal and a procedure for gathering data for accreditation decisions. As a result, it has continued to rely heavily on the on-site evaluation of its institutions by an experienced consultant-evaluator corps made up of professional educators chosen from institutions throughout the region.

In 1978, the Commission adopted a statement of "institutional obligations of affiliation" which supplemented the "conditions of eligibility." At the same time it sought to introduce greater clarity into both the self-study process and its evaluation by adopting a series of "certification statements" that described a general evaluation procedure.

In 1980, the Commission, its member institutions, and its Executive Commissioners reexamined all of these recent statements in an effort to further clarify and simplify them. This led, in 1981, to the adoption by the Commission of the **Criteria for Accreditation** and **Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation** (discussed in Chapters III and IV) *which incorporate and supersede all of these previous statements* and serve as the basis for accreditation as it is currently conducted by the Commission.

The evolution of the Commission's policies and procedures over the past seventy years or so has been constant, and there is no reason to believe that this will not be so in the next seventy. Like Jefferson the Commission has been and continues to be open to change and progress; like Mill it recognizes that "education . . . is one of the subjects which most essentially require to be considered by various minds, and from a variety of points of view. For of all many-sided subjects, it is the one which has the greatest number of sides."

II. General Institutional Requirements

Every postsecondary educational institution affiliated with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education must demonstrate that it satisfies each of the following **General Institutional Requirements**. Taken together, they define the kind of institution that the Commission considers a part of its educational universe.

Requirements of the Institutional Program

1. The institution has formally adopted a statement of mission appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution. This requirement limits the scope of the Commission's work and the ranks of its member and candidate institutions to those that have not only formally adopted a statement of mission, but to those that have adopted a statement of mission that the Commission judges to be "appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution."

2. The institution offers one or more educational programs (or curricula) consistent with that mission, including general education at the postsecondary level as an essential element of, or a prerequisite to, its principal program(s). This general education requirement excludes institutions, such as those focused on vocational or technical training, which do not offer studies other than those immediately pertinent to such training. In an effort to clarify what it means by general education and what role examining an institution's general education should play in the accreditation process, the Commission adopted the following Statement on General Education at its meeting on June 20, 1983:

> General education is "general" in several clearly identifiable ways: it is not directly related to a student's formal technical, vocational or professional preparation; it is a part of every student's course of study,

regardless of his or her area of emphasis; and it is intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess.

The Commission expects each institution affiliated with it to develop a rationale and a program of general education which are appropriate to its own mission and purposes. The clarity of that rationale, the appropriateness and effectiveness of that program, and the extent to which that program is "general" and "an essential element of" the institution's curricula are to be examined as part of every self-study and every institutional evaluation.

While an institution may offer some educational programs not requiring general education, it must provide reasons (such as small enrollment) for *not* regarding these educational programs as among its principal programs.

Since the Commission recognizes that there are some institutions which offer only professional graduate work, it has explicitly provided that such graduate schools can meet this requirement by making undergraduate work containing a general education component a prerequisite for admission.

3. **The institution has adopted a statement specifying the potential students it wishes to serve, and admits students to its programs under admissions policies compatible with this statement and appropriate to its programs.** By requiring that such a statement be formulated, the Commission seeks to insure that the institution's vision of its potential student population is clear and consistent with its mission, and that its publicly stated admissions policies correspond to that vision.

4. **The institution enrolls students in at least one postsecondary educational program normally requiring at least one academic year (or the equivalent) for completion, and has students actively pursuing such a program at the time of the Commission's evaluation.** This requirement excludes institutions which offer only short courses from Commission accreditation; however, it also makes it clear that the Commission regards offering short courses in a context established by the presence of more extended programs as appropriate. Students must be enrolled and actively pursuing work at the time of the Commission's evaluation, since an institution cannot be

judged by plans alone; the Commission must be able to evaluate how those plans are put into practice.

5. **The institution awards to each person successfully completing an educational program a certificate, diploma, or degree appropriately describing the demonstrated attainment of the graduate. (Note: if no student has completed a program at the time of evaluation – which may happen in the case of a candidate institution – the institution must have adopted requirements for program completion appropriate to the credential to be awarded, and enrolled students must be working toward meeting these requirements.)** This requirement directs the attention of both the institution and the Commission to the problem of maintaining the integrity of postsecondary degrees, since only by maintaining their integrity can the public's confidence in the educational process be sustained. The judgment that an institution's degree requirements are appropriate to the degree being awarded is not an easy one because there is only the most general understanding about the meanings of various degrees in the United States. Nevertheless, this requirement makes the issue one which must be consciously faced—first by the institution in its self-study, and then by the Commission in its evaluation.

Requirements of Organization

6. **The institution has a charter and/or other formal authority from an appropriate governmental agency authorizing it to award any certificate, diploma, or degree it awards.**

7. **The institution has all the necessary operating authorities in each jurisdiction in which it conducts activities.** Through these requirements the Commission recognizes that in the United States educational institutions—even private institutions—operate and confer degrees under the authority of government.

8. **The institution has formally designated a chief executive officer, or has formally organized and staffed a chief executive office.** The chief executive officer has responsibility for the management of the institution under authority of the governing board. The chief executive officer is the Commission's usual point of contact with the institution.

9. **The institution has a governing board that includes representation reflecting the public interest.**

(Note: If an educational institution is part of a larger organization, and a separate institutional governing board may not be possible or appropriate – e.g., an institution operated by the military services – the Commission may approve alternative means by which the interests of the public are appropriately represented and expressed in the operation of the institution. Such alternative means are explicitly approved for each institution as an individual exception to this general requirement.) This requirement recognizes that educational institutions have a public purpose: the education their students receive will have long-term effects on society as well as on their graduates as individuals. Consequently, every governing board should include some members dedicated to reflecting the public interest in the councils of the institution.

Requirements of Operation and Public Disclosure

10. The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to carry out its stated purposes.

11. The institution has its financial statements externally audited on a regular schedule by a certified public accountant or state audit agency. The institution makes available to the public and the Commission on request the most recently audited financial statements (or a fair summary thereof), including the auditor's opinion. The student's welfare is the Commission's fundamental concern in establishing these requirements. When a student enrolls in an institution, that student makes a substantial commitment of time and money to it and should have reasonable ways of determining that the institution has the resources to provide a satisfactory program while the student is there.

12. The institution makes freely available to all interested persons (and especially its present and prospective students) accurate, fair, and substantially complete descriptions of its programs, activities, and procedures.

13. The institution will have graduated at least one class in its principal programs before the Commission's evaluation for accredited status. If the institution has graduated its first class not more than one year before the Commission's evaluation, the effective date of accreditation will be the date of graduation of that first class. This requirement only affects newly-established

institutions and institutions not yet accredited and offering a new program. Evaluative Criterion 3 for accreditation requires demonstration of accomplishment of purpose; this Requirement makes clear that the Commission will consider such demonstration at the earliest possible time. The Commission's evaluation may begin with a team visit shortly before the graduation of the first class, but that class must have been graduated *before* the review and decision components of the evaluation occur.

The GIRs and Applying Institutions

When it first seeks affiliation with the Commission, an applying institution must demonstrate that it meets each of these General Institutional Requirements. To do this, it completes a **Preliminary Information Form** (see Appendix A), which the staff of the Commission then examines. If that examination indicates **probable** compliance with the GIRs, the institution will be counseled to begin preparing for a comprehensive evaluation by undertaking a self-study for candidacy or accreditation. Since Candidacy is not a prerequisite to accreditation, an institution applying for initial affiliation with the Commission may choose to seek either status. The staff person assigned to work with an applying institution will explain the options it has as it begins its self-study. New or developing institutions will usually choose to seek candidacy first; older, more established institutions often choose to seek accreditation. The choice of which form of affiliation to pursue will be based on the institution's assessment of whether it can demonstrate that it meets the Evaluative Criteria for Candidacy or the Criteria for Accreditation.

In either case, a completed self-study report—**not** a completed Preliminary Information Form—is the institution's formal application for affiliation with the Commission.

III. Accreditation

The Criteria for Accreditation

To be accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, an institution must demonstrate that it satisfies each of the following *Criteria for Accreditation.*

The Criteria for Accreditation

A. An accredited institution meets the ***General Institutional Requirements.***

B. An accredited institution also fulfills four ***Evaluative Criteria:***

(1) it has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution;
(2) it has effectively organized adequate human, financial and physical resources into educational and other programs to accomplish its purposes;
(3) it is accomplishing its purposes;
(4) it can continue to accomplish its purposes.

These Criteria outline a plan for internal and external evaluation of an institution in relation to its own purposes —an approach that has been the foundation of the Commission's accreditation process since 1934. Many of the GIRs require objective determination of whether an institution conforms to them. Others, along with all four Evaluative Criteria, require the exercise of professional judgment in determining conformity. The procedures of the Commission have been deliberately developed to insure that the final decision is based on the combined judgments of many experienced persons who have access to full and complete information about the institution.

In other words, while the Evaluative Criteria are intentionally general, the judgments concerning them are

founded on careful and detailed examination of the specifics of the institution. Their generality insures that accreditation decisions focus on the particulars of each institution's own purposes, rather than on trying to make each institution fit into a preestablished mold.

The Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation

1. The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution. Each of the other Evaluative Criteria is related to this fundamental one which embodies the Commission's philosophy of judging an institution on the basis of its own purposes. As it is used here, "purposes" refers to the multiple and specific ends the institution wishes to achieve in order to carry out its more general "mission." Most institutions have broad, general statements of mission that are relatively brief; statements of purposes—of long- and short-range institutional goals, of programmatic objectives—are more specific and detailed. For example, an institution's mission might be, in part, "to meet the educational needs" of its community; its related purposes might be "to provide vocational and technical training . . . to provide opportunities for continuing education to adults," etc.

Determining whether these purposes are "clear and publicly stated" involves judgment of more than where and how they are published and found; it also involves determining whether there seems to be a common understanding of the purposes of the institution among its various constituents and members.

Determining whether an institution's purposes are "appropriate to a *postsecondary* educational institution" is a task that becomes more and more challenging as the postsecondary educational universe broadens and expands; but this stipulation in the criterion demands that an institution's individual place in that universe be evaluated as part of the accreditation process.

2. The institution has effectively organized adequate human, financial and physical resources into educational and other programs to accomplish its purposes. This criterion focuses on whether an institution *can* carry out its stated purposes, and specifies that the primary expression of organizational effectiveness is the institution's programs themselves. Judging that an institution meets this criterion requires detailed information—about

administrators, faculty, staff, students and the community; about the institution's financial condition; about its facilities—and careful study of how the institution's resources are deployed and administered to make accomplishment of its purposes feasible.

3. **The institution is accomplishing its purposes.** It is possible for adequate resources to be available and apparently well-organized but ineffectively used. This criterion asks for a judgment of what is actually being accomplished at an institution. Assessing institutional effectiveness and educational outcomes is crucial to this judgment; and this is so in spite of the fact that the educational community is still wrestling with the difficulties of observing and accurately evaluating such outcomes. Standardized test scores; student materials such as papers, theses and dissertations; data on student attrition, on the placement of graduates in jobs or their acceptance into graduate and professional schools; the general reputation of the institution—any or all of these may be taken into account in evaluating whether an institution's educational purposes are being achieved. This criterion does not prescribe *any single form* of outcome measurement. But it does prescribe that an accredited institution has developed outcome measures, and that these measures provide evidence that the institution is, in fact, achieving its purposes.

4. **The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes.** If accreditation is to serve both educators and the public we need to make predictions about the strength and stability of educational institutions. The student who makes a commitment to an accredited institution by enrolling in it relies on its ability to continue to offer programs of satisfactory quality. Assurance that everything is all right *now* is not enough.

Of course, judgments about an institution's future must be based, in part, on the success of its past and present. How well it has developed its resources to their present condition, how stable its faculty and administration have been, how strong it is at the moment are all indicators of the future. But the Commission also seeks information about the institution's plans and outstanding commitments: about whether it has rationally assessed the conditions that will impinge upon it in the future, whether it has the financial and other resources necessary to respond to unforeseen circumstances, whether it has leadership

wise and farsighted enough to anticipate future opportunities and difficulties and respond to them in constructive and creative ways.

The Evaluation Process: An Overview

The Commission's process of evaluation for both initial and continued accreditation has been formulated to determine whether an institution meets these Criteria for Accreditation. It may be divided into four parts.

First, the institution undertakes a self-study aimed at examining how it meets the Criteria. The results of this self-examination are summarized in a Self-Study Report which forms the basis for the Commission's evaluation. The completed Self-Study Report constitutes the institution's formal application for initial or continued accreditation.

Second, the institution is visited by a team of evaluators appointed by the Commission. This team conducts a peer review by gathering comprehensive information about the institution and summarizing its findings in a written Team Report which offers advice and suggestions for improvement, assesses whether the institution satisfies the Criteria, and concludes with a formal recommendation for accreditation action. The institution has an opportunity to make a formal written response to the team's report and recommendation.

Third, the Self-Study Report and the Team Report are reviewed by a Readers' Panel and/or by a Review Committee which meets with representatives of the institution and the visiting team. If the review process produces suggested changes in the recommendation of the team, the institution and the team are offered an opportunity to respond in writing.

All recommendations and institutional responses are then considered by the Commission, which takes official action on the institution's accreditation.

The Evaluation Cycle

Every institution must have its accreditation reaffirmed not later than five years after it has been initially granted, and not later than ten years following each subsequent reaffirmation. The time for the next comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation is explicitly stated in the Commission's accreditation action; however, the time of the next evaluation may be changed and may occur sooner if the institution introduces or plans changes

which substantially alter its mission, functions or character (see Chapter VII).

IV. Candidacy for Accreditation

The Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation

To be granted candidacy by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, an institution must demonstrate that it satisfies each of the following *Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation.*

The Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation

A. A candidate for accreditation meets the ***General Institutional Requirements.***

B. A candidate for accreditation also fulfills four ***Evaluative Criteria:***

(1) it has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution.

(2) it has effectively organized adequate human, financial and physical resources into educational and other programs so that it is accomplishing its immediate purposes;

(3) it is following realistic plans to acquire and organize any additional resources needed to accomplish its stated purposes;

(4) it has the potential to achieve accreditation within the candidacy period.

The Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation are closely related to the Criteria for Accreditation since they are meant to provide candidate institutions with a foundation for logical development toward accreditation. Like the Criteria for Accreditation they are divided into two parts: General Institutional Requirements and Evaluative Criteria. The General Institutional Requirements for candidacy are identical to those for accreditation (some candidates may not yet have met GIR 13, see pp. 11-12). The

Evaluative Criteria for Candidacy differ from those for accreditation, reflecting the fact that a candidate institution has not yet developed to the point where it meets the Evaluative Criteria for Accreditation and is, therefore, accreditable.

The Evaluative Criteria for Candidacy

1. **The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution.** This criterion *is* identical to the first evaluative criterion for accreditation, since every institution affiliated with the Commission must at least have such purposes. As it is used here, "purposes" refers to the multiple and specific ends the institution wishes to achieve in order to carry out its more general "mission." Most institutions have broad, general statements of mission that are relatively brief; statements of purposes—of institutional goals, of programmatic objectives—are more specific and detailed. For example, a candidate institution's mission might be, in part, "to meet the educational needs of its community"; its purposes might be "to provide vocational and technical training... to provide educational opportunities to adults," etc.

Determining whether these purposes are "clear and publicly stated" involves judgment of more than where and how they are published and found; it also involves determining whether there seems to be a common understanding of the purposes of the institution among its various constituents and members.

Determining whether an institution's purposes are "appropriate to a *postsecondary* educational institution" is a task that becomes more and more challenging as the postsecondary educational universe broadens and expands; but this stipulation in the criterion demands than an individual institution's place in that universe be evaluated.

2. **The institution has effectively organized adequate human, financial and physical resources into educational and other programs so that it is accomplishing its immediate purposes.** This criterion differs from the second evaluative criterion for accreditation in that it speaks of a candidate's accomplishing its *immediate* purposes. The difference is meant to acknowledge that a candidate is not yet fully developed to the point at which it has the ability to accomplish *all* of its purposes. However, the

wording of this criterion—unlike that of the second evaluative criterion for accreditation—requires that the candidate not only have organized the resources to accomplish these immediate purposes, but that it *be* accomplishing them. The criterion limits attention to immediate purposes, but requires actual accomplishment. (In effect, the second evaluative criterion for candidacy combines the second and third evaluative criteria for accreditation as they apply to the candidate's immediate purposes.)

This criterion specifies that the primary expression of organizational effectiveness is the institution's programs themselves. And judging that an institution fulfills it requires detailed information—about administrators, faculty, staff, students, and the community; about the institution's financial condition; about its facilities—and careful study of how the candidate's resources are deployed and administered to accomplish its immediate purposes.

3. **The institution is following realistic plans to acquire and organize any additional resources needed to accomplish all of its stated purposes.** This directs attention to the candidate's plans for development over the six-year candidacy period. It requires that the candidate demonstrate that it has conducted a self-study of its strengths and areas of concern and has done the necessary planning—for students, faculty, staff, curriculum, financial, physical, and other development—so that it can realistically be expected to accomplish all of its stated purposes within that period.

4. **The institution has the potential to achieve accreditation within the candidacy period.** In making this judgment, the candidate's present condition, its plans and its timetable for developing to the point where it meets the Criteria for Accreditation must be examined. Candidacy is of limited duration, and the Commission seeks to determine through this criterion that the candidate's current plans are likely to allow it to achieve accreditation within this limited period.

The Evaluation Process for Candidacy: An Overview

When an institution first requests affiliation with the Commission, it must provide documentation showing that it appears to meet the General Institutional Requirements (see pp. 8-11 and Appendix A). If the examination of the documentation indicates *probable* compliance with the GIRs, a member of the Commission staff will be

assigned to advise the institution as it proceeds through the candidacy process. The Commission's process of evaluation for both initial and continued candidacy has been formulated to determine whether an institution meets all of the Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation. It may be divided into four parts.

First, the institution prepares a Self-Study Report for Candidacy which documents that it satisfies the Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation. This Report forms the basis for the Commission's evaluation and constitutes the institution's formal application for Candidacy for Accreditation. In preparation for subsequent biennial visits for continued candidacy, the institution updates the original Report, showing the progress it has made toward fulfilling the Criteria for Accreditation. Through successive revisions during the candidacy period the Self-Study Report for Candidacy is developed into the Self-Study Report for initial accreditation.

Second, the institution is visited by a team of evaluators appointed by the Commission. The team gathers information about the institution and summarizes its findings in a written Team Report which offers advice and suggestions for improvement, assesses whether the institution satisfies the Criteria for Candidacy, and concludes with a recommendation for action on the institution's application for candidacy. The institution has an opportunity to make a formal written response to the Team Report.

Third, the Self-Study Report for Candidacy and the Team Report are reviewed by a Readers' Panel and/or by a Review Committee which meets with institutional and team representatives. If this review process produces suggested changes in the team's original recommendation, the institution and the team are offered the opportunity to respond in writing.

Finally, all recommendations and institutional responses are considered by the Commission, which takes official action on the institution's candidacy.

The Evaluation Cycle

Candidacy is continued by evaluations scheduled at least every two years during the candidacy period. These biennial evaluations are conducted to determine that the institution continues to meet the Criteria for Candidacy for Accreditation and also to assist the institution as it moves toward fulfilling the Criteria for Accreditation.

The maximum length of candidacy is six years. Extensions of candidacy beyond the sixth year are granted only rarely and require special Commission action. The candidacy period has no minimum length, nor is candidacy required as a preliminary step toward accreditation. An institution may request that it be evaluated for accreditation—rather than for candidacy—when it initially contacts the Commission or whenever it believes that it can demonstrate that it meets the Criteria for Accreditation.

V. The Evaluation Process

Comprehensive and Focused Evaluations

Evaluations conducted by the Commission are either **comprehensive** or **focused**.

The Commission determines whether an institution satisifies the Criteria for Candidacy or the Criteria for Accreditation through an evaluation that is **comprehensive** in scope. These evaluations—for initial or continued candidacy, initial or continued accreditation—examine all functions and operations of an institution in light of the appropriate set of Criteria. Comprehensive evaluations produce recommendations and, ultimately, Commission actions concerning (a) whether an institution should be granted initial or continued candidacy or accreditation; (b) whether its candidacy or accreditation should be accompanied by any stipulations (e.g., that the institution's accreditation or candidacy be limited to offering only certain degrees); (c) whether any reports should be filed and/or focused evaluations should be conducted before the next comprehensive evaluation; and (d) when the next comprehensive evaluation should be conducted.

Focused evaluations occur between comprehensive evaluations and examine only certain aspects of an institution. They restrict themselves to *only* those aspects and are meant to monitor specific developments, changes or concerns between the institution's scheduled comprehensive visits. The Commission may call for a focused visit as part of its accrediting action, and either the Executive Commissioners or the Commission staff may schedule such an evaluation under Commission policies concerning change (see Chapter VII). In either case, focused evaluations do *not* require a complete institutional self-study and do *not* produce recommendations and actions concerning the withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation. Instead, the recommendations of a focused evaluation

team are limited to (a) the focus of the visit; (b) the addition or deletion of stipulations; (c) the need for and timing of any further focused evaluations or written reports before the next comprehensive evaluation; and (d) the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation.

Initiation of the Process

Non-affiliated institutions initiate the evaluation process for initial candidacy or accreditation by formally contacting the Director of the Commission. The institution is then asked to complete a **Preliminary Information Form** (see Appendix A) and submit it—with supporting documentation—to the office of the Commission. The Commission's staff assesses whether or not the institution **appears** to meet the General Institutional Requirements and, if the analysis *suggests* that it does, a member of the staff is assigned to work with the institution as it begins the process of self-study.

Currently accredited and candidate institutions have been placed on an evaluation cycle by their last Commission action. Two years before that scheduled evaluation, the Commission staff person assigned to the institution sends the chief executive officer a reminder letter about the forthcoming evaluation visit. The letter specifies the type of evaluation that is scheduled, encloses pertinent information and Commission documents, and asks that the CEO review the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status and indicate any changes he or she wishes to have made in it (see Chapters VI and VII). The letter also asks the CEO to indicate the name of the institution's self-study coordinator, the preferred dates for the evaluation visit, and the competencies the institution would like to see represented on the evaluation team. At this time, the institution is also asked to develop and submit a plan for its self-study process which briefly describes the study's design, strategies, and timetable. One year before the on-site visit, the institution receives another letter of reminder.

Focused evaluations called for by Commission actions basically follow this same procedure. Focused evaluations to assess institutional change (see Chapter VII) are initiated by the Executive Commissioners or the Commission staff as circumstances warrant.

The Commission may call for a comprehensive or focused evaluation at any time that it believes one is warranted. In such cases, the Commission reserves the right to specify

both the timing of the evaluation and the materials to be used, without the usual cycle of reminder letters and without the usual requirement (in the case of comprehensive evaluations) that the institution undertake a comprehensive self-study and prepare a self-study report.

The Self-Study Institute

One- and two-year reminder letters also invite each institution to send representatives to the Self-Study Institute sponsored by the Commission at the North Central Association's Annual Meeting held in Chicago in early spring. The Institute provides these representatives with guidance about various elements of the self-study and accreditation processes, an opportunity to review Commission policies and procedures, and a chance to exchange information and ideas with people from other institutions which are or have recently been engaged in evaluations for accreditation.

Attendance at the Self-Study Institute is voluntary. While the Institute is open to all interested persons, it is particularly useful for self-study coordinators and chief executive officers of institutions scheduled for comprehensive evaluations. While many institutions choose to attend the Self-Study Institute during both of the two years before their on-site visit, institutions are especially encouraged to have representatives attend the earlier one.

Staff Assistance to Institutions

A member of the Commission's professional staff is permanently assigned to each institution affiliated with the Commission. This staff member serves as the institution's resource person and liaison with the Commission office, both during the evaluation process and between evaluations.

Institutional representatives may visit the Commission's office in Chicago for individual consultation with their staff person and, if it is useful, the staff person may also visit the institution.

The Commission staff person assigned to each institution reviews its self-study plan, provides counsel about ways to integrate the self-study for accreditation with ongoing programs of evaluation of institutional planning and effectiveness, develops a proposed evaluation team for the on-site visit, and reviews the final draft of the institution's Self-Study Report. It should be clearly understood, however, that staff members do *not* make candidacy or accreditation decisions or recommendations.

The Self-Study

The process of institutional self-study is the foundation of the Commission's comprehensive evaluations for candidacy or accreditation. A separate publication, *A Guide for Self-Study and Evaluation*, provides detailed information on organizing for, conducting, and reporting the results of such self-study. In outlining the steps in the evaluation process, however, it is necessary to emphasize the self-study's crucial importance. When it receives its two-year reminder of a forthcoming comprehensive evaluation—if not before—the institution should proceed to organize and conduct its self-study.

Choosing a Visiting Team

While the institution is gathering data, evaluating it, and beginning to organize it into a formal self-study report, the Commission staff person assigned to the institution is developing a proposed visiting team from among the Commission's corps of consultant-evaluators. Some time before the scheduled evaluation visit is to take place, the staff person sends a list of proposed evaluation team members to the institution for comment. This list is accompanied by information on each proposed team member's present position, experience, and areas of expertise. The institution is invited to express any concerns or reservations it may have about any of the proposed team members, and these concerns are considered when the Commission staff develops the final team. While the Commission reserves the right to make the final choice of all visiting teams, it makes every effort to alleviate serious institutional concerns.

Following this institutional review, the Commission formally invites team members to serve. When all members of the visiting team have accepted the evaluation assignment, the institution is formally notified. Any subsequent changes in its makeup because of such things as scheduling conflicts and emergencies are also made in consultation with the institution.

Once all of the team members have agreed to serve, the team chair contacts the institution to make arrangements for the visit. The chair will also arrange a pre-visit at this time if the institution requests it. Pre-visits are normally scheduled when an institution believes that its structure or geographical locations will require special advance discussion of a substantial kind with the team chair. The Commission bills the institution for the pre-visit according to its established fee schedule (see pp. 39-40). The

expenses of the team chair are reimbursed by the Commission office.

The Self-Study Report

When an institution being evaluated for candidacy or accreditation has completed its self-study, it prepares a clear, concise narrative report which summarizes what it has learned. This report, which forms the basis for the Commission's evaluation and constitutes the institution's formal application for candidacy or accreditation, must include each of the essential elements described in *A Guide for Self-Study and Evaluation*. The institution is invited to submit a draft of its report to its Commission staff person for comments and suggestions. The final report must be completed and sent to the Office of the Commission a *minimum* of two months before the date of the on-site visit.

Documents to be Prepared

The institution prepares *sets* of materials for use during the evaluation process. Each set for a comprehensive evaluation includes (a) the appropriate Self-Study Report, (b) completed Basic Institutional Data forms, which provide a summary of statistical information concerning finances, enrollment trends, etc. (BIDs are sent to the institution by the Commission with the one year reminder letter), (c) the latest institutional catalog(s), (d) faculty and student handbooks.

The general formula for determining the number of *sets* needed for the evaluation process is as follows:

- *one set* for the Commission office
- *one set* for *each* member of the evaluation team
- review process
  - *three sets* for the Evaluators' Panel process
  - up to *twelve sets* for the Review Committee process
- any number of sets the institution wishes to produce for its own use

In addition to these sets of materials, which are distributed, the institution also places in an office on campus set aside for use by the visiting team relevant supporting documents such as:

- Bylaws and statutes of the institution
- Budget for current year and audit for last fiscal year

- Major institutional reports and records, such as minutes of faculty meetings, the chief executive officer's annual reports, etc.
- Reports submitted to, and evaluation reports received from, professional accrediting agencies in the last five years
- Summary data regarding faculty teaching loads
- Summary data regarding the number and size-range of classes
- Collective bargaining agreement, if applicable

Distribution of Materials by the Institution

Two months before the on-site visit the institution sends one complete set of materials to the Commission. One month before the on-site visit the institution sends one complete set of materials to each of the members of the evaluation team. *The institution holds the remaining sets of materials for use during the review process.*

Distribution of Materials by the Commission

One month before the on-site visit the Commission sends to the institution and the evaluation team: (a) the team report of the previous comprehensive evaluation, (b) the report of any subsequent evaluation, (c) a history of the institution's relationship to the Commission since the last comprehensive evaluation, and (d) a copy of the institution's Statement of Affiliation Status.

Evaluation Fee

Prior to the visit, the institution is billed for the evaluation according to the current Commission Evaluation Fee Schedule (see pp. 39-40).

The On-Site Visit

The team makes the on-site evaluation visit. Team members usually arrive the evening before the visit is to begin to discuss and review plans for the evaluation. During the visit the team members interview members of the administration, the Board, any state coordinating agency, the faculty, the student body, and the community. They gather data, verify the information contained in the Self-Study Report, and develop a team report on what they have learned.

Before leaving the campus, the team meets with the chief executive officer and members of the institution's staff to summarize its findings and outline its perceptions of institutional strengths and concerns. During this exit interview the team chairperson also informs the institution of its probable accrediting recommendation and its rationale for that recommendation. (See *A Manual for the*

Evaluation Visit for more detailed information on this aspect of the evaluation process.)

The Draft Team Report

Within four weeks of the on-site visit the chairperson sends a draft of the Team Report, including the team's accrediting recommendation, to the chief executive officer, the other team members, and the Commission staff member assigned to the institution. The draft is labeled "for corrections of errors of fact only." The chairperson then makes any necessary corrections and, if the corrections are substantive, may poll the members of the team to revise the recommendation.

The Final Team Report

Within six weeks of the on-site visit, the chairperson submits the original of the final team report to the Commission. The office of the Commission duplicates the report and mails four copies to the chief executive officer of the institution and one copy to each team member.

The Institutional Response

The chief executive officer of the institution is then asked to make a formal written response to the Team Report. This response becomes part of the official record of the evaluation, is considered during the Commission's review process, and is made available to the next evaluation team which visits the institution.

Review Processes

The Commission has established two processes for the review of evaluations: the Readers' Panel and the Review Committee.

Institutions evaluated for initial candidacy or initial accreditation are *required* to go before a Review Committee; institutions undergoing evaluations for continued candidacy or accreditation or focused evaluations are asked to choose the process they prefer. If there is no substantial disagreement between the institution and the team concerning the Team Report and recommendations, the institution chooses the Readers' Panel; if there is, it asks to be considered by a Review Committee.

The Readers' Panel

The Readers' Panel, which is composed of three Commissioners-at-Large, conducts an independent review of all written evaluation materials. Readers receive copies of the Team Report from the Commission; the institution is responsible for sending each of them a complete set of its materials, including copies of the institution's response to the Team Report.

The Readers' Panel process has one purpose: to determine whether further discussion with a Review Committee is likely to lead to alteration of the team's Statement of Affiliation Status recommendation. The Readers cannot alter either the Team Report or its recommendation.

In making their judgments, Readers consider the following questions: Is the team's recommendation adequately supported by factual information in the team report and the institution's documents? Do the institution's report and supporting documents contain information that is not addressed in the team report, and which might significantly affect the recommendation for action? Does the institution's response indicate significant disagreement with the team's recommendation, making further review desirable? Does the institution's response contain significant new information that is likely to change the recommendation?

If at least two of the three readers believe that Review Committee consideration is *not* likely to lead to alteration of the team's SAS recommendation, the team recommendation is forwarded directly to the Commission for action. The Commission then has the option of accepting the team's recommendations or referring the institution to a Review Committee for further consideration.

If at least two of the three readers believe that Review Committee consideration *is* likely to lead to alteration of the team's SAS recommendation, the institution is scheduled to appear at a Review Committee session for further consideration.

The Review Committee

A Review Committee, composed of seven to twelve Commissioners-at-Large, considers all institutions required to go through this process, all those who choose it, and all those referred to a Review Committee by the Readers' Panel or the Commission.

Before the Review Committee meeting the office of the Commission provides the institution with the names of the Committee's members. The institution sends each member of the Review Committee a complete set of institutional materials; the Commission sends each a copy of the Team Report. *Before* the Review Committee meeting, the institution may also add any other *written* information it believes the Committee should have to evaluate the visiting team's recommendation. The chief executive

officer of the institution and the chairperson of the evaluation team are invited to meet with the Review Committee to discuss the team's report and its recommendation.

During this informal meeting, the institution and the team chair have an opportunity to provide additional information by making brief presentations and answering the questions of the Review Committee's members. On the basis of its examination of the written record and its discussion with the chief executive officer and the team chair, the Review Committee either supports or recommends alteration of the visiting team's recommendation. It is also required to provide written reasons for its own recommendation. The Review Committee's recommendation and rationale are communicated to both the institution and the team chair and are forwarded to the Commission.

The Institutional Response

The institution and the team are then invited to prepare formal written responses to the Review Committee's recommendation. As part of its response, the institution may include any additional materials it thinks will be relevant to the Commission's decision.

Commission Action

The Commission conducts several meetings a year at which it considers recommendations on institutions. After reviewing all recommendations and institutional responses, it takes official action. A letter from the Director of the Commission, accompanied by a revised Statement of Affiliation Status, formally notifies the institution of the Commission's action.

The Appeals Process

To appeal a Commission action, an institution must file with the Secretary of the North Central Association a formal request for reconsideration within thirty days after the date on which official action was taken. The request must represent official action of the governing body of the institution. An institution considering filing an appeal should request a copy of the "Summary of Appeals Procedure" from the Commission office (see Appendix B).

General Information for Institutions Following Accreditation Actions

The Commission recommends the following form for disclosing in catalogs, advertisements, brochures, and other publications that the institution is accredited:

> **(Name of institution) is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.**

The phrase "fully accredited" must be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

If for reasons of space a shorter form is necessary, the wording can be abbreviated by omitting reference to the Commission:

> **(Name of institution) is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.**

If the institution is a candidate, the words "accredited by" should be replaced with "a candidate for accreditation with."

North Central accreditation has reference to the *institution* as a *whole*. Statements like "this program is accredited by North Central", or "this degree is accredited by North Central" are incorrect.

The North Central Association is a membership organization whose members are the institutions accredited by a Commission of the Association. Thus "member institution" and "accredited institution" are synonymous. Reference to "membership" must therefore be limited to *accredited* institutions; candidate institutions are not "members" of the North Central Association, although they are affiliated with it.

The timing of the next comprehensive evaluation which is specified in the accreditation action of the Commission is subject to alteration if significant changes occur in an institution. *North Central accreditation is not for a specific period of time but is a continuing relationship between the institution and the Association which is subject to reconsideration when necessary.* Annual reports from institutions and other information are regularly examined to see whether changes have occurred (or are anticipated) that would necessitate a different time for the next evaluation. Thus, while Commission policies dictate that every institution must be evaluated at least once every ten years, many

institutions are evaluated more frequently. *Since the timing of the next evaluation is subject to change, an institution should avoid unduly emphasizing it.*

After final Commission action, each institution may make public the entire team report or excerpts that are accurate (i.e., verbatim or reasonable paraphrases) and which correctly reflect the entire report in its balance of strengths and concerns. If it distributes excerpts, the institution should indicate that the full report is available on request. The Commission does not make the report public unless an institution misrepresents it.

The Commission encourages an institution to distribute the Team Report among all of its constituencies. The institution should be careful to point out to those who receive the report, however, that the visiting Team Report does not constitute a summary of the entire North Central evaluation process; it is only the report of the team that visited the institution. Since the Commission's review processes sometimes result in an accrediting action other than the one the team recommended, misunderstandings occur if the preliminary nature of the Team Report has not been made clear.

Listing in the NCA Quarterly and the CIHE Briefing

An institution's candidate or accredited status with the Commission is listed in the *North Central Association Quarterly* beginning with the Fall issue after official action is taken. Supplements to the *Quarterly* are produced after each Commission meeting at which institutional actions are taken. Reports of institutional actions taken by the Commission are also published in the CIHE *Briefing* newsletter.

Categorization of Degrees

When it grants candidacy or accreditation to an institution, the Commission specifies the types of certificates and/or degree programs that institution awards. The *North Central Association Quarterly* listing indicates the highest degree conferred by each affiliated institution; the Educational Programs section of each institution's Statement of Affiliation Status (see Chapter VI) explicitly states all of the types of certificates and/or degree programs the institution's status with the Commission covers.

For the purposes of the *Quarterly* and *Briefing* listings and the Statement of Affiliation Status, the Commission uses the following certificate and degree designations:

- Certificates and diplomas carrying no degree titles (C)
- Associate's degrees signifying arts and sciences curricula (A/a) (generally A.A. and A.S.)
- Associate's degrees signifying vocational-technical curricula (A/v) (generally all degrees other than A.A. and A.S.)
- Bachelor's degrees signifying arts and sciences curricula (B/a) (generally B.A. and B.S.)
- Bachelor's degrees signifying professional curricula (B/p) (generally all degrees other than B.A. and B.S.)
- Master's degrees signifying arts and sciences curricula (M/a) (generally M.A. and M.S.)
- Master's degrees signifying professional curricula (M/p) (generally all degrees other than M.A. and M.S.)
- Specialist certificates or degrees beyond the Master's (S) (generally the Education Specialist)
- Doctor's degrees signifying research curricula (D/r) (generally the Ph.D. and Ed.D. or equivalent)
- Doctor's degrees signifying professional curricula (D/p) (generally professional doctorates: M.D., J.D., D. Min., etc.)

A SAMPLE TIMELINE

Before the On-Site Visit

-24 months	Commission notifies institution of scheduled evaluation Institution initiates planning for self-study
—22 months	Institution notifies Commission of requested changes in its Statement of Affiliation Status, its self-study coordinator, preferred dates for the on-site visit, and team competencies _____ appoints Self-Study Steering Committee _____ sends representatives to the Self-Study Institute
—20 months	Steering Committee develops a self-study plan and submits it to Commission staff for review _____ organizes and selects principal subcommittees
—18 months	Planning completed Committees gather data, interview, analyze, and develop draft reports for submission to the Steering Committee
—10 months	Steering Committee analyzes information received, completes studies, prepares rough draft of Self-Study Report Commission sends a list of proposed evaluation team members, a Statement of Affiliation Status worksheet, and an Evaluation Visit Summary Sheet to institution
—8 months	Commission notifies institution of evaluation team members Steering Committee circulates and receives reactions to draft report
—6 months	Editor compiles final Self-Study Report Team chair contacts institution to make arrangements for on-site visit
—3 months	Institution completes duplication of Self-Study Report, completes BIDs, etc.
—2 months	Institution sends **one** complete set of evaluation materials to the Commission
—1 month	Institution sends **one** complete set of evaluation materials to each member of the visiting team
0	On-site visit

After the On-site Visit

+1 month	Team chair completes draft of Team Report and circulates it for corrections of errors of fact	
+1 ½ months	Team chair completes final Team Report and submits it to the Commission	
+2 months	Commission duplicates Team Report and sends copies to the institution and the team Institution responds to Team Report and (if it has a choice) chooses review process it prefers	
+2-5 months	Review Processes	
	Readers' Panel.	Commission sends Team Report to each Reader Institution sends Self-Study Report, BIDs, institutional catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, and response to Team Report to each Reader
	and/or	
	Review Committee.	Commission sends Team Report to each Review Committee member Institution sends Self-Study Report, BIDs, institutional catalogs, faculty and student handbooks, response to Team Report, and any other information it believes is relevant to each Review Committee member. Institutional and team representatives meet with the Review Committee
+3-8 months	Commission action	

DOCUMENTS FOR THE EVALUATION VISIT

1. Documents to be sent to the Commission staff **at least two months** before the on-site visit (*one set*):

   - the appropriate report (Self-Study Report for Candidacy, Self-Study Report, Focused Report)
   - completed Basic Institutional Data forms*
   - latest institutional catalog(s)
   - faculty and student handbooks

2. Documents to be sent directly to each member of the visiting team **one month** before the on-site visit (*one set to each team member*):

   - the appropriate report (Self-Study Report for Candidacy, Self-Study Report, Focused Report)
   - completed Basic Institutional Data forms*
   - latest institutional catalog(s)
   - faculty and student handbooks

3. Documents to be set aside in an office on campus for use by the visiting team:

   - Charter and/or formal authority from an appropriate government agency in each jurisdiction in which the institution operates authorizing it to award a certificate, diploma or degree at the level at which accreditation is sought
   - Information about the institution's governing board, including a roster of members, minutes of Board meetings, etc.
   - Bylaws or statutes of the institution
   - Budget for current year
   - Major institutional reports and records, such as minutes of faculty meetings, the chief executive officer's annual reports, etc.
   - Reports submitted to, and evaluation team reports received from, professional accrediting agencies in the last five years
   - Summary data regarding faculty teaching loads
   - Summary data regarding the number and size-range of classes
   - Collective bargaining agreement

4. Documents to be mailed to each member of the Readers' Panel or Review Committee which will consider the institution's evaluation. (Three sets for the Readers' Panel; up to twelve sets for the Review Committee.) (The Commission will send the names and addresses of these reviewers to the institution after the team report and institutional response have been received. The Commission forwards copies of the team report.)

- the appropriate report (Self-Study Report for Candidacy, Self-Study Report, Focused Report)
- institutional response to the team report
- completed Basic Institutional Data forms*
- latest institutional catalog(s)
- faculty and student handbooks

*BIDs are not required for focused visits unless they are pertinent to the visit's scope.

COMMISSION EVALUATION FEE SCHEDULE AND ANNUAL DUES SCHEDULE

* *1984-85 EVALUATION FEE SCHEDULE* *

Fees for Team Visits to Institutions

FIXED FEE BASIS. The Commission schedule of fixed fees for evaluation visits is based on the size of the team and the length (number of days) of the visit, and the following formula is applied (N = number of persons on team):

Length of Visit	Fee
1 day	$650N + $550
2 days	$800N + $550
3 days	$950N + $550
4 days	$1100N + $550

General criteria for determining team size for evaluations for initial or continued accreditation (generally three-day visits):

Highest Degree Level Offered	Size of Team
Certificate & Associate (FTE = 1-1,999)	4 team members
Certificate & Associate (FTE = 2,000-more)	5 team members
Bachelor's (FTE = 1-1,999)	4 team members
Bachelor's (FTE = 2,000-more)	5 team members
Master's and Specialist	5 team members
Doctoral	8 team members

Usual team size for other types of evaluations (for all institutions):

Type of Evaluation	Size of Team
Initial Candidacy (three days)	4 team members
Continued Candidacy (two days)	2-3 team members
Focused (two days)	2 team members

Table of fees for evaluation visits according to fixed fee schedule for all types of team visits to institutions (N = number of persons on team):

	N=1	N=2	N=3	N=4	N=5	N=6	N=7	N=8
1 day	1200	1350	2500	3150	3800	4450	5100	5750
2 days	1350	2150	2950	3750	4550	5350	6150	6950
3 days	1500	2450	3400	4350	5300	6250	7200	8150
4 days	1650	2750	3850	4950	6050	7150	8250	9350

COST PLUS BASIS. The fee to the institution for a cost-plus visit is: direct cost of visit + 10% of direct cost.

Fees for Pre-Visits by Team Chairpersons

First day	$650.
Each succeeding consecutive day of same visit	150.

Fees for Generalists to Accompany Program Accreditation Teams

First day	$650.
Each succeeding consecutive day of same visit	150.

* *1984-85 ANNUAL DUES SCHEDULE* *

The annual dues for candidate and member institutions are based on the full time equivalent enrollment of the institution in the fall term of the academic year preceding the date of billing.

Enrollment	Annual dues
0-499	$370
500-1,999	$695
2,000-4,999	$1,025
5,000-9,999	$1,350
10,000-over	$1,675

VI. The Statement of Affiliation Status

A History of the Statement

At its meeting on April 29, 1982, the Commission established a new format for identifying an institution's current relationship with it. The Commission directed that a **Statement of Affiliation Status** which incorporates all current information on its accredited or candidacy status be prepared for each institution. It also specified that, beginning with the 1982-83 academic year, the charge to each visiting team would be to recommend modifications in this Statement, the official accrediting action of the Commission would be the adoption of a revised Statement, and formal notification of that accrediting action would be the transmission of the newly-revised Statement to the chief executive officer of the institution.

In addition, the Commission adopted a *"Policy on Changes Affecting the Affiliation Status of an Institution"* which eliminated the previous terminology of "limited" and "substantive" change and mandated that **all** changes which alter an institution's Statement of Affiliation Status must be approved by the Commission **before** they are effected by the institution. (See Chapter VII and Appendix B.)

With these two actions, the Commission made understanding the role and function of the Statement of Affiliation Status of paramount importance to everyone involved in the Commission's accreditation process. SASs were sent to all affiliated institutions with the 1984 Institutional Annual Report forms.

A Description of the Statement

Each statement contains nine basic elements:

- the name and address of the institution
- a description of the institution's public or private, nonprofit or proprietary character (in the case of

proprietary institutions, this section also identifies the proprietors)

- a description of the institution's candidate or accredited status with the Commission
- a description of the institution's degree program types
- a description of the locations at which the institution operates
- a description of any limitations or stipulations attached to its status
- information about any reports the institution is required to file with the office of the Commission
- information about any focused evaluations scheduled before the next comprehensive evaluation, and
- the date of the institution's most recent comprehensive evaluation and the scheduled date of its next comprehensive evaluation.

Each time a change in the information pertaining to one of these elements occurs, the Statement is updated and a revised Statement is sent to the institution by the office of the Commission. Thus, at any given time, the most recent Statement contains all of the current information concerning the status of the institution's affiliation with the Commission.

A Simple Case

In its simplest form, a Statement of Affiliation Status might look like this:

AFFILIATION STATUS OF

Oppenheimer University
Los Alamos, NM 87105

(Effective June 24, 1975)

Control:	Oppenheimer University is a private, not-for-profit institution.
Status:	Oppenheimer University is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Educational Programs:	The University offers programs leading to the Master's (arts and sciences curricula) degree and the Doctor's (research and professional curricula) degree.
Locations:	The University's degree programs are offered at its campus in Los Alamos.
Stipulations:	None.
Reports Required:	None.
Focused Evaluations:	None.
Comprehensive Evaluations:	Oppenheimer University's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1974-75. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1984-85.

When an evaluation team visits Oppenheimer in 1984-85 its recommendation will take the form of proposing that the University's Statement of Affiliation Status be modified (for details of this use of the Statement, see *A Manual for the Evaluation Visit*). The team's recommendation might be that Oppenheimer's revised Statement should read:

AFFILIATION STATUS OF

Oppenheimer University
Los Alamos, NM 87105

(Effective June 21, 1985)

Control:	Oppenheimer University is a private, not-for-profit institution.
Status:	Oppenheimer University is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
Educational Programs:	The University offers programs leading to the Master's (arts and sciences curricula) degree and the Doctor's (research and professional curricula) degree.

Locations:	The University's degree programs are offered at its campus in Los Alamos.
Stipulations:	None.
Reports Required:	None.
Focused Evaluations:	None.
Comprehensive Evaluations:	Oppenheimer University's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1984-85. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1994-95.

If neither the review process nor Commission consideration produced a contrary recommendation, the Commission would officially continue Oppenheimer University's accreditation by adopting this revised Statement. The University would be formally notified of the Commission's decision by receipt of a letter from the Director of the Commission accompanied by a copy of the revised Statement.

A Complex Case

More often, the Statement of Affiliation Status and its use is slightly more complicated than this. A more complex Statement of Affiliation Status might be:

AFFILIATION STATUS OF

F. Scott Fitzgerald College
2000 Summit Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55422

(Effective June 24, 1980)

Control:	Fitzgerald College is a private, not-for-profit institution.
Status:	Fitzgerald College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
Educational Programs:	The College offers programs leading to the Bachelor's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree and the Master's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree. It also offers credit courses at these degree levels not applicable to degrees offered.

Locations:	The College's degree programs are offered at its campus in St. Paul, and at instructional sites in Rochester and St. Cloud, MN.
Stipulations:	The College must seek approval from the Commission before initiating any new Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.
Reports Required:	The College is to file financial reports with the office of the Commission by October 1, 1982 (for the 1981-82 fiscal year) and October 1, 1983 (for the 1982-83 fiscal year). Each of these reports shall consist of or include an external audit.
Focused Evaluations:	The College is scheduled to have an evaluation in 1983-84 focused on the effectiveness of the planning, managment, and evaluation system.
Comprehensive Evaluation:	Fitzgerald College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1979-80. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1985-86.

Following receipt of the first financial statement in October 1982, the Statement would be revised to delete that requirement, which will no longer be effective. Following staff analysis of the report, a revised Statement would be sent to Fitzgerald College to inform it of its current status. As revised, this Statement would read:

AFFILIATION STATUS OF

F. Scott Fitzgerald College
2000 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55422

(Effective October 1, 1982)

Control:	Fitzgerald College is a private, not-for-profit institution.
Status:	Fitzgerald College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Educational Programs:	The College offers programs leading to the Bachelor's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree and the Master's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree. It also offers credit courses at these degree levels not applicable to degrees offered.
Locations:	The College's degree programs are offered at its campus in St. Paul, and at instructional sites in Rochester and St. Cloud, MN.
Stipulations:	The College must seek approval from the Commission before initiating any new Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.
Reports Required:	The College is to file a financial report with the office of the Commission by October 1, 1983 (for the 1982-83 fiscal year). This report shall consist of or include an external audit.
Focused Evaluations:	The College is scheduled to have an evaluation in 1983-84 focused on the effectiveness of the planning, managment, and evaluation system.
Comprehensive Evaluation:	Fitzgerald College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1979-80. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1985-86.

After the second report was received and accepted, the Statement would be revised to indicate that no further reports were required. The newly-revised Statement, which would be sent to Fitzgerald College, would then read:

AFFILIATION STATUS OF

F. Scott Fitzgerald College
2000 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55422

(Effective October 1, 1983)

Control:	Fitzgerald College is a private, not-for-profit institution.
Status:	Fitzgerald College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
Educational Programs:	The College offers programs leading to the Bachelor's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree and the Master's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree. It also offers credit courses at these degree levels not applicable to degrees offered.
Locations:	The College's degree programs are offered at its campus in St. Paul, and at instructional sites in Rochester and St. Cloud, MN.
Stipulations:	The College must seek approval from the Commission before initiating any new Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.
Reports Required:	None.
Focused Evaluations:	The College is scheduled to have an evaluation in 1983-84 focused on the effectiveness of the planning, managment, and evaluation system.
Comprehensive Evaluation:	Fitzgerald College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1979-80. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1985-86.

In 1983-84, the visiting team for the focused evaluation would receive this current Statement and the charge to formulate its recommendation by proposing modifications in the Statement. The team would also be informed that its recommended revisions may not change the "Status" section of the Statement, but that the team may recommend revisions of any of the Statement's other parts that it believes are warranted.

The official Commission action taken following the visit would consist of the adoption of a revised Statement that would repeat all of the parts of the Statement unchanged by this visit and include additions (if any) developed from the team recommendation and the review process. Fitzgerald College's revised Statement might then read:

AFFILIATION STATUS OF

F. Scott Fitzgerald College
2000 Summit Avenie
St. Paul, MN 55422

(Effective June 22, 1984)

Control:	Fitzgerald College is a private, not-for-profit institution.
Status:	Fitzgerald College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
Educational Programs:	The College offers programs leading to the Bachelor's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree and the Master's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree. It also offers credit courses at these degree levels not applicable to degrees offered.
Locations:	The College's degree programs are offered at its campus in St. Paul, and at instructional sites in Rochester and St. Cloud, MN.
Stipulations:	The College must seek approval from the Commission before initiating any new Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.
Reports Required:	None.
Focused Evaluations:	None.
Comprehensive Evaluation:	Fitzgerald College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1979-80. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1985-86.

With the next comprehensive evaluation in 1985-86, the Statement would again be revised. The College would be invited to request any changes it wishes made in the Statement. The evaluation team would be advised that its charge is to recommend modifications in any of the basic elements of the Statement. If the review process produces no changes, the team's recommmendation, which would be adopted by the Commission, might produce a Statement reading:

AFFILIATION STATUS OF

F. Scott Fitzgerald College
2000 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55422

(Effective June 22, 1986)

Control:	Fitzgerald College is a private, not-for-profit institution.
Status:	Fitzgerald College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
Educational Programs:	The College offers programs leading to the Bachelor's (arts ands sciences and professional curricula) degree and the Master's (arts and sciences and professional curricula) degree. It also offers credit courses at these degree levels not applicable to degrees offered.
Locations:	The College's degree programs are offered at its campus in St. Paul, and at instructional sites in Rochester and St. Cloud, MN.
Stipulations:	The College must seek approval from the Commission before initiating any new Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.

Reports Required:	The College is to submit to the office of the Commission by October 1 of each year the externally audited financial statement for the fiscal year concluded the previous June 30. Each of these statements is to be examined by the staff of the Commission. If an increased deficit in current fund balance, increased borrowing by the fund from endowment, or a sharp rise in accounts receivable occur, a visit focused on the financial stability of the College is to be conducted immediately.
Focused Evaluations:	None.
Comprehensive Evaluation:	Fitzgerald College's most recent comprehensive evaluation occurred in 1985-86. Its next comprehensive evaluation is scheduled for 1989-90.

These case studies indicate that evaluations and Commission actions are now reflected in each institution's Statement of Affiliation Status, and that the Statement is the central document of the accreditation process.

Public Disclosure of the Statement of Affiliation Status

An institution may make its Statement of Affiliation Status public as long as it discloses the entire statement. In responding to inquiries regarding an institution's affiliation with the Commission, the Commission's staff will explain that affiliation status and, when appropriate, will also disclose the following information drawn from the Statement: a description of the institution and its control, its principal educational programs and instructional location(s); any stipulations attached to the institution's affiliation; the *dates* of required reports and scheduled focused evaluations; and the *dates* of the last comprehensive visit. The Commission staff will only disclose the entire Statement of Affiliation Status with an institution's approval.

VII. Institutional Change

The Commission and Institutional Change

Since the purposes of the North Central Association include encouraging institutional improvement and certifying that the institutions affiliated with it continue to meet the Criteria for Accreditation or Candidacy, the Commission has established the program of periodic evaluation which has been described earlier. The timing of these periodic comprehensive evaluations for continued candidacy or accreditation is determined, to some extent, by the degree of change anticipated at an institution and the resources that the institution has to respond to that change.

The Commission recognizes that change within the institutions affiliated with it is as constant and rapid as it is challenging and inevitable. It also realizes that change is, for the most part, healthy. Consequently, it does not attempt to interfere with an institution's efforts to respond creatively to the many internal and external forces which demand that it develop and modify its functions and operations if it is to grow or, often, even survive. Most institutional changes--such as developing new majors and concentrations or phasing out others, changing personnel, adding or dropping courses, redefining program requirements--fall within the mission and scope of the institution, do not require special notification of the Commission, and do not affect its candidate or accredited status with the Commission.

But between comprehensive evaluations, the Commission also monitors crucial changes within an institution in a number of ways: by requiring that all institutions affiliated with it submit annual reports that include information about such changes; by requiring reports focused on a particular aspect of the institution; and by scheduling evaluations focused on specific developments or concerns within an institution.

Changes Affecting the Affiliation Status of an Institution

To make a clear distinction between those institutional changes that require explicit Commission approval and those that do not, the Commission has established a "Policy on Changes Affecting the Affiliation Status of an Institution." The policy states that:

- the Statement of Affiliation Status sets forth in full the status of an institution with the Commission;
- institutional change and corresponding alteration of the Statement must be approved under the authority of the Commission *before* the change is effected by the institution;
- an institution planning such change must request approval of the change and corresponding Statement alteration, and must provide written materials describing the change proposed and its effect on other parts of the institution;
- recommendations to the Commission for approval of the institutional change and the corresponding Statement alteration may be made by the staff or a panel of evaluators; if an institution disagrees with such recommendations it may request Review Committee consideration of them; in such a case the recommendation of the Review Committee will pass to the Commission after the institution has had an opportunity to respond to it; on-site visits either before or after the institutional change is effected may be required, but an on-site visit is not in all cases required before approval;
- a request for approval of institutional change and the corresponding alteration of the Statement may be withdrawn by an institution at any time before the final action is taken, and no reason for withdrawing the request need be given;
- if the institutional change is approved, the institution is free to effect the change; if approval is denied, effecting the change automatically terminates candidate or accredited status.

In the case of an institution which initiates a change without receiving Commission approval, the Commission, at its meeting on August 17, 1984, adopted a new policy describing a new sanction, the **Memorandum for the Record**. That policy reads as follows:

> The Memorandum for the Record is an official Commission letter which indicates that an institution,

because of its initiation of institutional change without required prior Commission approval has violated its institutional obligations of affiliation.

The Memorandum is sent to the institution by Commission staff together with appropriate procedures for Commission approval of institutional change. The Memorandum becomes a part of the institution's official file and will be shared with the next visiting team.

This policy does not apply to an institution which has initiated change after failing to receive Commission approval of the change (see Policy 1.C.1). (NOTE. Policy 1.C.1 says that in such situations an institution's accreditation will be automatically withdrawn.)

Implementation of the Policy

The institution must provide a written request for approval of an institutional change affecting its affiliated status and the corresponding alteration in its Statement of Affiliation Status. **The request must be made early enough so that approval can be provided *before* the change is effected and the Statement thereby made incorrect.**

The request must specify the alteration desired in the Statement of Affiliation Status and provide the following information:

1. A description of the proposed change and the planning that led to it.

2. Evidence that the institution has the necessary internal and external approvals to initiate the change.

3. Evidence that the purposes of the change are clear and appropriate to the institution's purposes.

4. An analysis of the anticipated effect of the proposed change on the other parts of the institution.

5. Evidence that the institution has organized adequate human, financial and physical resources and processes to initiate, maintain, and monitor the change and to assure acceptable quality.

A recommendation to approve the change and the corresponding alteration in the Statement can be made to the Commission without an on-site visit before the change is implemented in a number of ways. The staff of the Commission may recommend that the Commission approve the change and the corresponding alteration if the staff member believes that the written materials convincingly support the proposed alteration *and* if an on-site visit has either occurred within two years before the change or is scheduled to occur within two years following it. If the visit scheduled within two years following the alteration is focused, its scope will be extended to include evaluation of the change that has been made. If the visit scheduled is comprehensive, it will include consideration of the proposed institutional change.

If the staff member cannot make a decision on the basis of the written materials alone, or if such on-site visits have not been scheduled, the request will be sent to an **Evaluators' Panel** of three persons drawn from the consultant-evaluator corps. Each evaluator will be asked to recommend either (a) that the change and the corresponding alteration in the Statement be approved, or (b) that an on-site visit be scheduled to evaluate the change before it is effected. The decision of a majority of the evaluators will be the decision of the evaluators as a group. If the Evaluators' Panel decides that an on-site visit should be made before the change is effected, further consideration of the proposed change will follow the usual procedure for focused visits.

If no on-site visit is made and if the institution disagrees with either the staff or panel recommendation, it may request further consideration by a regularly scheduled Review Committee. The institution will be given an opportunity to file a written response to the Review Committee recommendation before it is passed on to the Commission.

If no on-site visit is required before the change is effected, recommendations to approve an institutional change and the corresponding alteration in the institution's Statement will pass to the Commission from the staff or the Evaluators' Panel. If an on-site visit has been required, the recommendations of the visiting team and the Readers' Panel and/or Review Committee will come to the Commission. The Commission may, in either case, require

further information (and, if necessary, an on-site visit to gather it) before acting.

On-site visits required by the decision of an Evaluators' Panel will be part of an evaluation focused on the proposed change, and will pass through the regular Readers' Panel unless the institution requests consideration by a Review Committee.

The time required to formulate staff and/or Evaluators' Panel recommendations concerning alterations in the Statement of Affiliation Status will not normally exceed one month from the date of receipt of the institution's completed written materials.

Examples of Changes Covered by the Policy

The most common changes covered by this policy may be grouped according to the basic elements of the Statement of Affiliation Status which they would alter. Examples of such changes would be:

- changing the name and/or primary location of an institution
- changing an institution's private or public character (including changes in the denominational character of a religiously-affiliated institution)
- changing an institution's non-profit or proprietary character (e.g., changing ownership)
- seeking system accreditation rather than separate accreditation of individual units within a system (or vice-versa)
- seeking to offer degree programs other than those specified in the Statement
- offering credit courses outside of degree programs (for the first time or beyond the limits described in the policy on such courses)
- adding off-campus sites
- adding out-of-state or out-of-country sites (including miiitiary base sites)
- seeking to alter stipulations or limitations in the Statement
- seeking to delay a scheduled evaluation

A current Statement of Affiliation Status will be sent to each institution with its Institutional Annual Report form. When it completes the form, the institution is asked to compare the information contained in the Report with that in its Statement. If it finds any discrepancies between

these two documents, the institution should call the discrepancies to the Commission's attention. This will activate the policy on change if the discrepancy requires it. Institutions contemplating change should, on their own initiative, send a letter requesting approval of the change under the policy and procedures described earlier in this chapter if they wish to initiate the change at other times during the year.

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

from institutions considering affiliation with the Commission

Institutions of higher education may be affiliated with the Commission and the Association either as Candidates for Accreditation or as accredited (member) institutions. While the evaluative criteria for these different forms of affiliation differ, all institutions must meet the General Institutional Requirements. Further information on the evaluative criteria and the policies and procedures of the Commission are to be found in other Commission documents.

This document has been prepared to assist an institution considering affiliation with the Commission. It addresses only the General Institutional Requirements, describing the information usually needed to demonstrate that the institution meets those requirements. Please provide the information on separate sheets, following the pattern of this document. This information is requested for Commission staff review, so that the staff can counsel the institution on its further steps in seeking affiliation. The Commission does not assess any fees for staff review or counsel.

The staff of the Commission will prepare from this information an analysis of the ways in which the institution appears to meet the General Institutional Requirements. The staff analysis will be sent to the institution for comments and corrections. If the staff analysis shows that the institution appears to meet the General Institutional Requirements, the institution will be counseled to prepare a self-study document in which are addressed the evaluative criteria for accreditation or candidacy (as appropriate); please see the publications of the Commission for details of these criteria. Upon completion of the self-study document (which is the formal application for consideration), and upon request of the institution, and following determination by staff that the document appears adequate for the evaluation, the staff will make arrangements for a Commission evaluation, beginning with an on-site visit by a team of Commission consultant-evaluators.

The actual judgment of whether an institution meets both the General Institutional Requirements and the Evaluative Criteria is made as a part of the evaluation process through an on-site visit, review, and Commission action. The preliminary information, together with the staff analysis and the institution's comments on the staff analysis, will be available for use during the evaluation process.

Providing this information does not constitute an application for consideration by the Commission; the completed self-study document which serves as the basis for an on-site evaluation is the only application. An institution providing information does not commit itself to an evaluation by the Commission, nor does the institution establish any affiliation with the Commission until Commission action granting candidacy or accreditation.

The information requested in this form should be returned to:

Director
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
159 North Dearborn
Chicago IL 60601.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. The Bylaws of the North Central Association provide that "membership in the Association for institutions is voluntary and must be initiated by the legally designated governing body of the institution."

   Has the governing board of the institution approved initiating affiliation with North Central? If so, when? Include a copy of the action authorizing this step.

2. With what accrediting bodies is the institution currently affiliated?

3. With what accrediting bodies has the institution been affiliated in the past?

4. If the institution is under public control please state the jurisdiction(s) providing control (e.g., state, city, district).

5. If the institution is a private not-for-profit institution please state:

   its form of organization (e.g., corporation); please provide with this form copies of the legal documents relating to organization (e.g., certificate of incorporation and bylaws);

   the date of the currently effective federal Internal Revenue Service determination that the institution is a not-for-profit educational organization. Enclose a copy of the IRS notification.

6. If the institution is a private for-profit organization please state:

   its form of organization (e.g., corporation); please provide with this form copies of the legal documents relating to organization (e.g., certificate of incorporation and bylaws);

   the names and addresses of the owners (if a corporation, the names and addresses of those each of whom holds 20% or more of the voting stock).

SECTION B: GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

In several cases information is requested that may be available in the institution's catalog or other publication. In such cases please provide the publication and indicate in the response to the question where the information is to be found.

Requirements of institutional program:

The institution

1. Has formally adopted a statement of mission appropriate to a postsecondary educational institution;
   a. Please provide with this form a copy of the current statement of mission and purposes for the institution.
   b. By what body (or bodies) has this statement been adopted?
   c. When were the actions to adopt this statement taken? Enclose a copy of the actions.
   d. Where is the statement of mission and purposes published, or otherwise made generally available? Enclose a copy of the institution's catalog, faculty handbook, student handbook, and any other documents appropriate to the application.
   e. Identify those portions of the institution's documents relating to mission and purposes which explain and provide evidence of their appropriateness for a postsecondary institution.

2. Offers one or more programs (or curricula) consistent with that mission, including general education at the postsecondary level as an essential element of, or a prerequisite to, the principal program(s) (see note);

   NOTE: The Commission, at its meeting on June 20, 1983, adopted the following statement as a definition of the term "general education" as used in the General Institutional Requirements:

   General education is "general" in several clearly identifiable ways: it is not directly related to a student's formal technical, vocational or professional preparation; it is a part of every student's course of study, regardless of his or her emphasis; and it is intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess.

   The Commission expects each institution to develop a rationale and a program of general education which are appropriate to its own curricula and consistent with its own mission and purposes. The clarity of that rationale, the appropriateness and effectiveness of that program, and the extent to which that program is "general" and "an essential element of" the institution's curricula are to be examined as a part of every self-study and every institutional evaluation.

   a. Please list the programs (or curricula) regarded by the institution as its principal programs.
   b. What is the normal length of time required by a full time student to complete each of these programs?
   c. Please state how general education at the postsecondary level is required as an essential element of, or prerequisite for, the principal educational programs. Identify those sections of the catalog which refer to the general

education requirements if there are requirements or to the rationale for general education as a prerequisite if general education is not required.

d. How are the requirements for these programs made readily available to students and the public? Identify appropriate sections of the catalog.

3. Has adopted a statement specifying the potential students it wishes to serve, and admits students to its programs under admissions policies compatible with this statement and appropriate to the programs;
   a. Please provide a copy of the current statement specifying the potential students the institution wishes to serve.
   b. By what body (or bodies) was this statement adopted?
   c. When was this statement adopted? Attach a copy of the action.
   d. Please provide a copy of the current requirements for admission to each program offered by the institution.
   e. By what body (or bodies) have the admissions requirements been adopted? When? Attach copy of the action.
   f. How are the admissions requirements made known to prospective students? Identify appropriate sections of the catalog.

4. Enrolls students in at least one postsecondary educational program normally requiring at least one academic year (or equivalent) for completion, and has students actively pursuing such an educational program at the time of the Commission's evaluation;
   a. Please provide a copy of the graduation requirements for the certificate, diploma and degree programs offered by the institution.
   b. When were students first admitted (or will be first admitted) to each of these programs?

5. Awards to each person successfully completing an educational program a certificate, diploma or degree appropriately describing the demonstrated attainments of the graduate.
   a. What certificates, diplomas or degrees does the institution currently offer, or propose to offer in the near future?

Requirements of organization:

The institution

6. Has a charter and/or other formal authority from an appropriate governmental agency authorizing it to award any certificate, diploma or degree it awards;
   a. From what body or under what statutory provision did the institution receive its current formal legal authority to offer certificates, diplomas or degrees?
   b. When was this authority granted?
   c. Please provide photocopies of the documents providing notice to the institution of this authority.

d. Does the institution currently hold any additional formal legal authority to confer certificates, diplomas or degrees (if any)?

7. Has all necessary operating authorities in each jurisdiction in which it operates;
   a. At what locations does the institution conduct its activities?
   b. When did the institution receive formal legal authority to operate (please state for each location)?
   c. By what body or statutory provision was this authority granted (please state for each location)?
   d. Please provide photocopies of the documents providing notice to the institution of this authority.
   e. If the institution believes that operating authority is not required in a jurisdiction, please provide an attorney's opinion to that effect.

8. Has formally designated a chief executive officer, or has formally organized and staffed a chief executive office;
   a. Who is the chief executive officer of the institution?
   b. What is the title of the chief executive officer?
   c. Please give the office mailing address and telephone number of the chief executive officer.
   d. By what body was the chief executive officer appointed to that office?
   e. When did the present chief executive officer assume that office?

9. Has a governing board that includes representation reflecting the public interest.
   a. Please provide a list of the current members of the governing board of the institution. Include name, address, and occupation for each member.
   b. Include a copy of the Bylaws and identify those sections relating to the governing board, its selection, its duties and responsibilities. Indicate how members of the governing board are selected and provide specific evidence that the representation includes members reflecting the public interest.
   c. Please indicate which members (if any) are remunerated by the institution through salaries, wages or fees regularly or occasionally (reimbursed expenses are not remuneration).
   d. Please indicate which members (if any) are creditors of the institution, or guarantors for institutional debts.

Requirements of operation and public disclosure:

The institution

10. Documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to carry out its stated purposes;
    a. Please provide a one page summary of the institution's financial operating statement for the most recent three years.
    b. Please provide the institution's current projection of its operating statement for the next three years.
    c. Please provide any plan for financial development developed by the institution. Has this plan been considered or adopted by the governing board?

11. Has its financial statements externally audited on a regular schedule by a certified public accountant or state audit agency. The institution makes available to the public and the Commission on request the most recently audited financial statements (or a fair summary thereof), including the auditor's opinion.
    a. What is the schedule for institutional audits? Please provide a copy of the most recent external audit of the institution's financial statements, including the auditors' comments.
    b. How is this external audit (or a fair summary of it) made available to the public? Include copies of the summary if one is used.

12. Makes freely available to all interested persons (and especially its present and prospective students) accurate, fair, and substantially complete descriptions of its programs, activities and procedures;
    a. Please list the documents (catalogs, handbooks, brochures) that the institution uses to make available such descriptions of its programs, activities and procedures. Enclose copies of the catalog, faculty and student handbooks as requested earlier, and any other materials pertinent to this requirement.
    b. Please state the distribution each of these documents receives.

13. Will have graduated at least one class from each of its principal programs before the Commission's evaluation for accredited status. If the institution has graduated its first class not more than one year before the Commission's evaluation, the effective date of accreditation will be the date of graduation of that first class.
    a. When did the institution first award (or will first award) a certificate, diploma or degree for each of its principal programs?

APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Constitution and By-Laws of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Policy and Procedures for Approval of Changes Affecting the Affiliation Status of an Institution

Policy and Procedures for Offering Credit Courses Not Part of Degree Programs

Policy on Complaints Against Member and Candidate Institutions

Policy on Good Practices of Institutional Conduct

Policy on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit

Policy on Probation

Statement on Contractual Relationships Between an Accredited Institution and Other Organizations

Procedure for the Evaluation of Institutions Operating Interregionally

Summary of Appeals Procedure

The Generalist Service of the Commission

APPENDIX C

RULES OF PROCEDURE

of the

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

RULE 1: NAME AND AUTHORITY

This organization shall be known as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education ("the Commission") of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools ("the Association"). It is established under the Constitution of the Association, and derives its powers from the Constitution. These Rules of Procedure are intended to provide for fulfilling the responsibilities placed on the Commission by the Constitution.

RULE 2: COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

a. The Commission shall comprise fifteen persons called Executive Commissioners: three persons representative of the public and twelve persons broadly representative of institutions of higher education that are members of the Association. All Executive Commissioners shall be residents of a state within the geographic territory of the Association.

b. Each Executive Commissioner who is representative of the public shall have no current active affiliation with an institution of higher education in the geographic territory of the Association.

c. Each Executive Commissioner who is representative of institutions of higher education shall be a full time active appointee of a member institution of higher education of the Association.

d. Each Executive Commissioner shall serve a term of four years unless the term is extended because of election as an officer of the Commission. Terms shall begin on January 1. Terms shall be so arranged that approximately one-fourth of the terms expire each year. An Executive Commissioner shall serve until a successor is chosen and qualified.

e. No person shall be appointed or reappointed to a term or a portion of a term as an Executive Commissioner if by completion of that appointment the person will have served more than seven years as an Executive Commissioner.

RULE 3: MANNER OF ACTION

a. The Commission may adopt policies as it sees fit to exercise the powers and discharge the duties of the Commission that are specified in the Constitution of the Association.

b. Unless otherwise specified in the Constitution of the Association, these Rules of Procedure, or the policies of the Commission, the Commission itself shall take such actions as are required by the Constitution of the Association, or are necessary for the conduct of Commission business.

Note: The following powers and duties of the Commission are specified in the Constitution of the Association, and are inserted here for reference:

"a. To establish policies and procedures by which the activities of the Commission shall be carried out, including the selection of officers and committees for the Commission.

"b. To establish criteria which, when met, entitle an educational institution to receive the status of accreditation, and to establish procedures by which the determination of accreditation is made.

"c. To establish criteria which, when met, entitle educational institutions to be affiliated with the Association in ways other than membership, and to establish procedures by which the determination of such affiliation is made.

"d. To use the name of the Association in the conduct of Commission activities and on Commission publications.

"e. To publish books, pamphlets, and other materials needed to carry out Commission activities.

"f. To employ persons in the name of the Association.

"g. To assess dues and fees to be paid by affiliated institutions, to receive such dues and fees, and after reasonable notice to withdraw accreditation or other affiliation for non-payment of such dues and fees.

"h. To disburse funds and otherwise manage the financial affairs of the Commission, but the amount expended by a Commission during a year shall not exceed the revenue it receives during that year plus any amount remaining from the operations of previous years."

c. The Commission may not act to adopt or change any criterion by which the accreditation or other affiliation of an institution is judged until such proposed criteria or changes have been circulated for comment to all institutions affiliated with the Association through the Commission at least one month before the action is taken. Any comment received must be considered by the Commission before action is taken.

RULE 4: MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

a. The Commission shall meet at least twice each year, and may have such additional meetings as it wishes.

b. The Commission shall meet within the geographic territory of the Association at such times and places as the Commission shall designate.

c. Notice of a meeting of the Commission shall be provided to each Executive Commissioner at least sixty days in advance of the meeting, and may be provided to other persons by publication or in response to inquiry. The notice of meeting shall state the time and place of the meeting. In case of an emergency, the Commission may hold a meeting without sixty days advance notice, provided there is unanimous agreement of the Executive Commissioners to waive such notice.

d. A quorum of the Commission for the conduct of business shall be ten members.

e. Meetings of the Commission shall not be open to the public at large, but the Commission may adopt policies permitting persons not members of the Commission to attend part or all of Commission meetings.

f. The Commission may take action on any matter within its authority by mail ballot or by a conference using telecommunications under such rules as it may prescribe, provided that no action shall be adopted by fewer than ten affirmative votes.

g. Unless otherwise provided in these Rules or the Constitution of the Association, the meetings of the Commission shall be conducted according to *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised.*

RULE 5: RECORD OF ACTIONS

a. All actions establishing or modifying the affiliation of an institution with the Association through the Commission shall be transmitted in written form to the chief executive officer of the institution promptly after the action has been taken.

b. The Commission shall cause to be prepared and maintained a permanent record of all its actions, and shall distribute that record or make it available for inspection to representatives of member institutions of higher education of the Association, to the Board of Directors of the Association and to such other persons or groups as the Commission may designate.

RULE 6: OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION

a. The officers of the Commission shall be a Chair and a Vice Chair.

b. The term of office of each officer shall be two years, beginning on January 1.

c. Officers shall be elected as necessary from among the Executive Commissioners by majority vote of the Commission not later than two months before the beginnings of the terms of office.

d. If a person is chosen as an officer, the term of that person as an Executive Commissioner shall, if necessary, automatically be extended until completion of service as an officer, so long as that person meets the requirements for service as an Executive Commissioner.

e. The Chair of the Commission shall preside at all meetings of the Commission, and shall perform other duties required by these Rules or the Constitution of the Association, or customary to the office.

f. The Vice Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair in the absence of the Chair.

g. If the Chair is permanently unable to perform the duties of office, the Vice Chair shall succeed to the office of Chair to complete the unexpired term. In this event a new Vice Chair shall be elected promptly by the Commission to complete the unexpired term of the Vice Chair.

RULE 7: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COMMISSION

a. There shall be an Executive Committee of the Commission which shall have the power to act for the Commission between meetings of the Commission. The powers of the Executive Committee shall be defined in policies adopted by the Commission.

b. The Executive Committee shall comprise the officers of the Commission and two other Executive Commissioners elected for one year terms by the Commission at the meeting of the Commission first occurring after January 1. Members of the Executive Committee shall serve until their successors assume office.

RULE 8: COMMISSIONERS-AT-LARGE

a. There shall be a group of between seventy-five and one hundred persons (as determined by the Commission), each of whom shall be called a Commissioner-at-large.

b. Each Commissioner-at-large shall be a full time active appointee of a member institution of higher education of the Association and a resident of a state within the geographic territory of the Association.

c. The membership of the group of Commissioners-at-large shall meet the following conditions:

   i. There shall be at least two persons resident in each state within the geographic territory of the Association.

   ii. There shall be at least fifteen persons from institutions in each of the four degree levels:

   - highest degree less than bachelor's;
   - highest degree bachelor's;
   - highest degree above bachelor's but less than doctor's;
   - highest degree doctor's.

   iii. There shall be at least thirty persons from public institutions, and at least thirty persons from private institutions.

d. The term of office of each Commissioner-at-large shall be four years, beginning on September 1. Terms of office shall be so arranged that approximately one-fourth of the terms shall expire in any one year.

e. No one may serve through appointment and/or reappointment more than six consecutive years as a Commissioner-at-large.

f. Commissioners-at-large shall participate actively in the procedures by which institutions of higher education gain or retain affiliation with the Association. This participation shall be defined in policies adopted by the Commission.

RULE 9: STANDING COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS

a. There shall be a standing Committee on Appointments which shall appoint by majority vote persons to serve as Executive Commissioners and as Commissioners-at-large.

b. The Committee on Appointments shall comprise seven persons, as follows:

   i. Three Executive Commissioners, who shall not be officers of the Commission; and

   ii. Four chief executive officers of institutions of higher education that are members of the Association, who shall be neither Executive Commissioners nor Commissioners-at-large.

c. Members of the Committee on Appointments shall be appointed to one year terms by the Commission at the meeting of the Commission first occurring after January 1, and shall serve until successors have been appointed.

d. The membership of the Committee on Appointments shall meet the following conditions:

   i. There shall be at least one person from an institution in each of the four degree levels:

      - highest degree less than bachelor's;
      - highest degree bachelor's;
      - highest degree above bachelor's but less than doctor's;
      - highest degree doctor's.

   ii. There shall be at least two members from public institutions, and at least two members from private institutions;

   iii. There shall be no more than one member from a single state;

   iv. No one shall be appointed to more than one term on the Committee on Appointments within any four year period.

e. Appointments of persons to full terms as Executive Commissioners or as Commissioners-at-large shall be made by the Committee on Appointments not less than three nor more than six months before the beginning of the respective terms.

f. In the event of vacancies among the Executive Commissioners or Commissioners-at-large arising because of inability or unwillingness to continue service, the Committee on Appointments shall promptly appoint persons to fill the unexpired terms.

RULE 10: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

a. The Commission shall appoint a chief executive officer of the Commission, who shall be a full time employee of the Association.

b. The chief executive officer shall have such title as the Commission shall designate, and shall serve such term of office and under such conditions of employment as the Commission shall determine.

c. The chief executive officer shall have primary responsibility for administering the activities of the Commission under the direction of the Commission.

RULE 11: AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

These Rules of Procedure shall be amended by action of the Commission only after the proposed amendment has been circulated for comment to all institutions affiliated with the Association through the Commission at least one month before the action to adopt is taken. Each comment received must be considered by the Commission before action is taken.

RULE 12: TRANSITION PROVISIONS

a. These Rules of Procedure shall become effective on January 1, 1984, provided they are adopted before that date by an affirmative vote of not less than three-fourths of those designated "Commissioners" in the procedures of the Commission in effect in 1983.

b. Persons designated as "Commissioners" in the 1983 procedures and who hold that designation on January 1, 1984, shall automatically become members of the group of Commissioners-at-large defined in these Rules of Procedure. The term of office of each such Commissioner-at-large shall expire on August 31 of the year in which the term of office as "Commissioner" is to expire.

c. Persons who on January 1, 1984, are members of the Executive Board of the Commission as defined in the 1983 procedures shall automatically become Executive Commissioners. The term of office of each such Executive Commissioner shall expire on December 31 of the year in which the term of office as a member of the Executive Board is to expire.

d. The term of office of the Chair and Vice chair of the Commission in office on January 1, 1984, shall expire on December 31, 1984.

e. This Rule shall be dropped from the Rules of Procedure after January 1, 1985, without any necessity for deletion by amendment.

THE COMMISSION
1984-85

Dr. Bernard S. Adams (1986)
President, Ripon College, Ripon, WI 54971

Dr. James Ballowe (1985) (Vice-Chairperson)
Associate Provost and Dean of Graduate School, Bradley University, Peoria, IL 61625

Dr. Clair T. Blikre (1987)
President, North Dakota State School of Science, Wahpeton, ND 58075

Dr. John M.T. Chavis (1985)
Professor of History, Lincoln University of Missouri, 2223 Merlin Drive, Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dr. Frederick J. Crosson (1988)
O'Hara Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556

Ms. Sue Seibert Farnsworth, Esq. (1988) (public member)
1217 Chaplain Street, Wheeling, WV 26003

Mr. W. Howard Fort, Esq. (1985) (public member)
Schwab, Grosenbaugh, Fort and Seamon, Law and Commerce Building, 40 East Mill Street, Akron, OH 44308

Dr. Christine Gram (1985)
Academic Dean, Oakland Community College-Highland Lakes Campus, 7350 Cooley Lake Road, Union Lake, MI 48085

Dr. Reatha Clark King (1985)
President, Metropolitan State University, 121 Metro Square Bldg., St. Paul, MN 55101

Dr. William Mann (1987)
Chancellor, Metropolitan Community Colleges, 560 Westport Road, Kansas City, MO 64111

Sr. M. Janet McGilley (1987)
President, Saint Mary College, 4100 S. 4th Street Trafficway, Leavenworth, KS 66048

Dr. Ronald W. Roskens (1984) (Chairperson)
President, University of Nebraska, 3835 Holdrege, Lincoln, NE 68583

Dr. Lewis S. Salter (1987)
President, Wabash College, 301 W. Wabash, Crawfordsville, IN 47933

Mrs. Cordelia S. Spicer (1987) (public member)
Sun City West, AZ 85375

Dr. Alfred Sussman (1986)
Dean, Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48105